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<Book Reviews>Anne L. Foster. Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010, xii + 241p.

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Anne L. Foster. *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010, xii + 241p.

Much has already been written about the colonial experiences in Southeast Asian countries in the first half of the twentieth century. While Thailand kept its political independence throughout this period, all other countries in this region were colonized by Western powers, mostly by European nations, except for the Philippines, which was placed under the United States as its second colonial master at the turn of the century. Due to the *de facto* predominant presence and influence of European powers in Southeast Asia, discussions on this period largely focused on European powers, while the role of the United States was considered as minor or auxiliary.

In light of the historical experiences in Europe, the period between World War I and World War II has been termed as the “interwar period.” It was during this period that the historical paths of European nations changed drastically, while Europe finally saw its position decline as the political and economic center of the world, a position that it had maintained since the nineteenth century. Arguments on the “interwar period” of Southeast Asian history might make sense when attempting to explain reconfigurations in Southeast

Asia from a European point of view. However, this approach does not explain what role the United States played in Southeast Asia during this period and how it related to the process that played out as the United States gained superpower position in the region after World War II.

Through painstaking archival research, *Projections of Power* illustrates the positionality of the United States in Southeast Asia in the fields of politics, economy and culture between 1919-41 or what we can call the “interwar period.” However, it is interesting to note here that the author does not use the term “interwar period” in this book. Although she does not explain the reason explicitly, this may be due to Foster’s aim to reexamine this period in the light of American modern history.

As is widely known, the United States experienced a period of progressivism in the early twentieth century and it was during this period that the United States established its systematic administration and governance as a nation-state as well as an empire. As Foster discusses, this process unfolded within the United States and in the Philippines simultaneously (pp.81-86). In this context, we might see that the author understands the period of 1919-41 not as the “interwar period,” but as the paradoxical period for rising American hegemony in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world. Herein lie the distinctive features of this book: it offers a new framework for understanding the foreign relations among European and American powers in colonial Southeast Asia.

Focusing on the United States as the crucial actor in the discussion, the book explains how European and American powers connected with each other for sustaining their interests in the region, while respectively taking different positions on internal matters in regards to their colonies. To this end, I find that the discussions in the first three chapters relating to the politics, economy and culture are unique, while the latter two chapters which discuss the changing scenes after the 1929

Depression follow a rather conventional framework of previous literatures.

Chapter 1: "New Threats and New Opportunities" describes how the United States coped with the issues of raising communism in 1919-29 through the inter-colonial cooperation. Foster argues that the United States as a newcomer in this region cooperated with Britain, France and the Netherlands for this end. It was particularly so after the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) rebellion in 1926-27, as French, British, Dutch, and U. S. officials "perceived communism as a common, dangerous threat to the colonial order" (p. 41).

Chapter 2: "The Highways of Trade Will be Highways of Peace" presents the U. S. involvement in trade and investment in Southeast Asia. During the 1920s, the European colonial masters played the dominant roles in trade and investment in this region. However, we should not overlook the phenomenal rise of the penetration of America in Southeast Asian economies after World War I. This chapter exemplifies the dynamic American influence in rubber, tin and oil industries and how the United States found itself in rivalry against Japan as another rising power in Asia. In this connection, the author, focusing particularly on the U. S. role in economic expansion, also argues that blocking Japan became a common agenda among European and American powers (pp. 69-70).

Chapter 3: "An Empire of the Mind" depicts the colorful picture of American cultural influence in Southeast Asia between 1919-41. Foster observes that "America's most successful consumer product came from Hollywood" (p. 75). Indeed extensive discussions are given here on the influence of American movies in mass culture. The role of missionaries and the penetration of American goods into the consumer market are also exemplified here.

While the above three chapters emphasize the vigorous presence of American factors in a straightforward fashion, the latter two chapters

illustrate the constraints or contradictions of U. S. presence after the 1929 Depression. For example, Chapter 4: "Depression and the Discovery of Limits" describes how the U. S. economic interests in the export commodities like rubber, sugar or tobacco were affected when British Malaya, the Netherland Indies or some colonial administrations enforced various restrictions in the 1930s.

Chapter 5: "Challenges to the Established Order, 1930-1939" deals with various factors that shook the foundation of colonial rules, that is, communist or millenarian movements like Nghe-Tihn or Saya San rebellions and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Foster keenly looks at what European colonial masters expected of the United States in coping with these chaotic situations. She discloses her view that European colonial officials felt more threatened by Japanese ambitions in Asia than by continued radical nationalist activities in their colonies. She also states that Britain and France were willing for the United States "to participate in the region, especially in containing Japan" (p. 152).

Foster's view underestimates the prolonged effects of nationalist movements on colonial policies of European powers as well as the United States in Southeast Asia. Needless to say, the Cold War period, particularly its earlier part of the 1950s and 1960s was an era of rising nationalism in Southeast Asia. If we look back to the 1930s from the dramatic changes of this region after independence, we cannot downplay the historical significance of communism or millenarian movements as they started to spread sporadically in the 1930s, as well as their pervasiveness throughout the duration of the Japanese occupation period and their role as crucibles of nationalism after World War II.

From this perspective, the arguments in Chapter 5 should have been more clearly presented in regard to the following two points: first, how internal factors like rising nationalism affected the colonial orders after the Depression, and second,

how this situation of uncertainty in Southeast Asia was interwoven with international elements like Japan's invasion in Manchuria in the decision making process of foreign policies among European and American colonial powers. If these points had been developed more carefully, the book would have been able to bring out the more dynamic structural changes in colonial Southeast Asia in the 1920s and 1930s. The continuities and changes in U. S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia after 1945 could have been more logically traced in the conclusion of this book. The above observations notwithstanding, this is a worthwhile work for enriching our knowledge of the history of U.S. diplomatic policy as well as its economic penetration in Southeast Asia.

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Alfred W. McCoy. *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009, xiii + 659p.

In 2008, I was in a packed audience in one of the Ateneo de Manila University's large halls. Along with some other Philippinists, Alfred W. McCoy gave a presentation on what would become one section of *Policing America's Empire*. During the open forum, one Filipino woman stood up and asked if it was true that Quezon collaborated with the Americans as a spy. McCoy answered with an air of confidence that documents amply proved that Quezon had indeed dealt with the Americans behind closed doors and, if I remember right, cited a few more examples of Quezon's nefarious dealings. Somehow, this exchange remained in my mind while reading this book.

*Policing America's Empire* is an exemplary achievement of scholarship. In this work, McCoy's long-standing interests in narcotics, torture and

state violence are woven into Philippine history. Its contents include clandestine operations of police, political threats, assassination plots, narcotics, illegal gambling, and prostitution — incidents and characters of what he calls the “netherworld.” Its seventeen chapters encompass more than one hundred years, from the late Spanish colonial era to the Arroyo administration and are basically arranged chronologically. The first chapter entitled “Capillaries of Empire” sets the stage, where a colony is used as a laboratory of new technologies. Practices of governmentality and new technologies in turn bounce back to the metropolis. In this way, McCoy shows how the democracy of both the metropolis and the colony are corrupted. Part One (Chapters 2–9) deals with the American colonial era and Part Two (Chapters 10–17) with the commonwealth and post-independence periods. In particular, Chapters 9 and 17 make this work an excellent case study of global history. Respectively, he describes the work of surveillance in the United States as a repercussion of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines and the implications of colonial rule for the present-day America's war on terror.

However, more than the sheer length of this book or its varied subject matters, the use of documents is truly impressive. His reading of primary documents is extensive, ranging from the papers of the famous, such as Manuel L. Quezon and Dean C. Worcester, to those of the obscure, like Ralph Van Deman. Findings in primary documents are supported with careful readings of secondary sources and a string of articles from various publications, from the well-known *Philippines Free Press* to the lesser-known *Makinaugalingon*. His writing style is precise and crisp and it is because of this, combined with his expository strategy of placing an eye-catching scene at the start of each chapter, that the book reads like a crime thriller.

Its contributions lie in McCoy's attempt to add to two inter-related topics of scholarly interests. The first contribution is to America's empire and